THE CEA CRITIC

Vol. XXIII, No. 4 Published at Livingston, [illegible] Editorial Office, Upsala College, East Orange, N. J. April, 1961

DUKE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
MAY 12 1961
DURHAM, N.C.

"Experiment or Perish?"

College teachers of English as a class have a well established reputation for eloquent nay-saying. In a profession which not only suffers but honors the dissident, we are notable for the passion with which we speak against the faculty committee's knuckle-headed proposals for changing the curriculum, and for the forthright courage with which we oppose the sinister designs of the administration. No one is so devilishly witty as we in coining new pejoratives with which to damn the educationist and all his works. It is understandable that we should earn such a reputation, and it may even be forgivable. We were attracted into the profession as free spirits who value self-expression. We are professional students of the word as weapon, and dramatic conflict comprises a great portion of the literary materials with which we deal. Moreover, we have an enormous commitment to the "establishment": the tradition of Western culture; established usage, however grotesque and illogical, in spelling and grammar; and the comfortable (to us) practices of our stubborn British and Roman forbears.

Nevertheless, the establishment is giving ground, and we are in trouble. We who have served under the emblem of the boar, the porcupine, and the armadillo perhaps need a new ensign. Despite the comforting things we tell ourselves, English in the traditional sense is beginning to lose its preeminence in the curriculum. Some of our ancient functions are being taken over by departments of communications, by logicians, by the revived, refurbished and reequipped departments of modern languages, by departments and divisions of humanities, and by agencies of the School of Education, such as Reading Study Centers.

If we merely undertake to hold the line, to sneer at the teaching machine as a tin box for conditioning robots, and to content ourselves with our traditional role of the loyal opposition nobly upholding standards in an increasingly tawdry world, our tattered stars-and-bars is sure to be trampled in the end. There is still time to do some serious research into learning theory as applied to the uses of language, and to improve dramatically our practices in teaching our superior, average, and marginal students alike. What a joy it would be to see English Departments across the country setting up laboratories and designing experiments in learning instead of saying merely "the library is our laboratory and we know perfectly well how to teach English. It's just that the students don't learn." Programmed learning cannot be safely dismissed as a fad. It embodies

(Please turn to page 9)

Public Image of the English Teacher: The Professor in the Low Class Bar

From time to time in American history, heads of various corporations have said that they spoke the divine will. Louis the Fourteenth said, I remember vaguely, that he was the State. For myself, I am sorry to say that I simply do not have the gall to stand before you[1] and speaking for the American public tell you what I see when I look at an English teacher.

I was asked to speak on the public image of the English teacher. My immediate reaction was that this is rather simple: all I need do is write what I think of English teachers, and then after writing it in the first person, I would speak it in the third person and that would be my project, — done.

Getting my own notions together, however, was not easy. First of all an irrelevance intruded. Somehow I was reminded of Khrushchev's remark, when someone complained to him about anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Molotov, he replied, has a Jewish wife and, Khrushchev said, his relations with her are very good.

In another sense my own experience with English teachers once I left high school have also been very good. Every English course I ever had after high school was a delight and always after high school, a discovery. My teachers all taught as if they were illuminated and through them I acquired an interest in the literary and language arts which has made life bearable when I have been most miserable, and has enriched my few small triumphs by providing me with what might be called a stereoscope view of myself in a situation which might otherwise have given me a false estimate of myself.

No taste it seems to me excites the palate so much as the savor of self depreciation at the precise moment there is the anticipation of glory in your mouth.

I owe this appetite and the means of enjoying it to my English teachers.

Naturally these first conceptions of the public image of English teachers were something no English teacher could complain of, lavish, generous, appreciative.

Almost immediately, however, the virtues I acquired from my preceptors began to operate, and I immediately recognized that my private judgement was a silly personal conceit conceived inside a solipsism.

I set out then to try to find out what views people other than myself had of English teachers.

First I made a methodical but unscientific survey of people I talked to in the cities and situations I happened to be in. I don't want to suggest that there is anything scientific about what I have done, or that my conclusions have any more validity than you give them yourself.

What I sought to find out was what do different kinds of people think of English teachers, people with professional jobs, people who have been through college, people who read books more or less regularly, people who are very sophisticated about the books they read, people who never read books, people who have an instinctive suspicion of anyone they see reading a book.

My first inquiries suggested to me that if there is one person in the whole United States to whom almost no one gives any thought at all, it is the English teacher. On planes, in bars and lobbies, at parties, at local union meetings, around the government in Washington, and in and out of buildings in New York, so far as I could discover, the image an English teacher raised in anyone's mind was the visual equivalent of the sound one hand makes clapping.

There were two exceptions, my wife and the woman among her acquaintances she can least abide. Both of them imagined an English teacher as a sophisticated and witty person, responsible but unhappy. In general, a most attractive and glamorous figure.

My second impulse, however, led to an insight that must have been identical with the one that joined Monsieur Binet to Monsieur Simon in eternal hyphenation as Binet-Simon.

Instead of inventing the intelligence test on that spur of the moment, however, I invented a device to locate the English teacher topologically within the nonspace embraced by human experiences and attitudes.

You should not be misled. My undertaking as it was realized actually was as totally intuitive as three minutes of thoughtful nosepicking. But the inquiry does describe something which I am going to report on and then forget so I can get around to a more important subject!

What kind of noises do English teachers hear in a low class bar at twilight? The answer and an explanation of the relevance of this question will be dealt with later. For the moment consider the device I spoke about, which, as you have guessed, is a questionnaire.

First, I listed a number of occupations, including English teacher, and a one-word description that could be applied to them.

(Please turn to page 4)

1 Members of the Greater New York CEA, at Adelphi College, March 18, 1961.

THE CEA CRITIC
Official Organ of the College English Assoc., Inc.
Editor: Donald A. Sears
Upsala College
East Orange, N. J.
Published Monthly
September through May

COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION
National Headquarters: University of South Florida · Tampa
President: Harry T. Moore, So. Illinois Univ.
Vice Presidents: John Ball, Michigan State Univ.
Charles M. Clark, The American Univ.
Executive Secretary and Treasurer: John Hicks, University of South Florida · Tampa
Regional Coordinator: Patrick Hogan, Miss. State University

Directors
Thomas F. Marshall, Kent State
Marvin Perry, University of Virginia
Elisabeth Schneider, Temple University
Lee E. Holt, Am. International College
Muriel J. Hughes, University of Vermont
Marvin Laser, Los Angeles S. C.
Bruce Dearing, Univ. of Delaware
Earle G. Eley, Wilson Jr. College
Allan H. MacLaine, Texas Christian Univ.
Donald J. Lloyd, Wayne State Univ.

Presidents of Regionals
Chicago: Falk S. Johnson, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago
Greater N.Y.: Edward Huberman, Adelphi Col.
Indiana: Alvan S. Ryan, Notre Dame Univ.
Michigan: John Hepler, Central Mich. Univ.
Middle Atlantic: Allen B. Cook, U. S. Naval Academy
New England: C. L. Barber, Amherst College
New York: George M. Kahrl, Elmira College
N. C., Va.: Nathaniel H. Henry, Univ. of Richmond
Ohio: George E. Grauel, Miami Univ.
Penn.: Richard Bozorth, Univ. of Penn.
So. California: Wade Ruby, Pepperdine Col.
So. Central: Joseph M. Doggett, Univ. of Houston
Tenn.: Morris P. Landis, David Lipscomb Col.
Texas: C. Dwight Dorough, Univ. of Houston
W. Va.: Jack Brown, Marshall College

Associate Member, American Council on Education; Member, Educational Press Association of America. (Address contributions and correspondence to Editor, THE CEA CRITIC, Upsala College, East Orange, N. J.) Published at The Tribune Publishing Co., Livingston, New Jersey.

Annual subscription, including membership dues, $4.50. Library subscription, $2.50.

Second-Class Postage Paid at Livingston, N. J.

Entire issue, copyright 1961 by the College English Association, Inc.

CAMPUS CALL

Newspapers report that lights are burning late again in Washington. The energy and zeal of the new Administration seem to be admitted even by its chief critics. One of the most dramatic differences between the new Administration and the old is the refreshing interest in cultural and intellectual matters. The poet Robert Frost has become a symbol of the new day. American painting promises to receive an official recognition it never had when there was an amateur artist living in the White House. And a subtler music than the strains of Lawrence Welk or Fred Waring will be heard at White House functions. A new respect for the achievements of the mind can also be seen. Though I spare you all the stories about professors coming down from Cambridge, it is true that the scholar is being asked to help in government to an extent that reminds one of the heyday of the New Deal. Whatever the party in power, physicists and economists have often been asked for technical advice. But here is a regime which recruits historians and humanists as well.

Opportunities in Government

Forgive this partisanship. My purpose is not to exalt the new Administration over the old but to suggest that today is much better than yesterday for an exchange of academic and government jobs. I attempted to make a related point in the Winter number of the **AAUP Bulletin** and I shall try not to repeat myself. To be specific, I want to make a few applications here of my thesis for members of the CEA. This is because I am confident that for the professor of English there are now more opportunities for service than there ever were in the past. Not only in the US Information Agency and the State Department but also in HEW and a dozen other agencies which can benefit from the thinking of academics. Correspondingly, I should hope for increased use in academic life of the government official. In certain fields there is already traffic back and forth. One of my friends is a specialist in housing; it is easy to see why he shuttles between Washington and his campus. Another is a government specialist, equally mobile, in labor law. I must say frankly, however, that I cannot see as much opportunity for exchange in English departments. I admit I cannot see a government official lecturing to a class on Transcendentalism as easily as he might on public administration.

I want to make one other admission. Much as I hope that more of my university colleagues will work in the government for a time, I have no advice on how to get the position they might want. In my own case, I was asked by the government if I would be interested in a specific post. This seemed to me the best of all possible posts for someone in our field, and I unhesitatingly said yes. In general there is a serious lack of communication between government personnel offices and a good part of the campus, most of all our own. Communication ought to be much better than it is. As of now I have only the traditional channels of application and personal recommendation to cite.

Allowing for this considerable obstacle, I still think there are several points which can usefully be made. Not the least important one is psychological. Something makes us shrink a little from an appointment if it is offered. Often we are half afraid to leave the security of our classroom, the calm of our library carrel, and plunge into government. We are apt to reflect mass opinion, and one of its tenets is that professors are vague-minded theoreticians. I think the notion is nonsense. Generally the professor who goes into government acquits himself pretty well. The experience is invigorating, as a rule, and ample recompense for any dislocation. I hope that you will take a chance even if it means fighting the battle of the multiple copy, even if it means a bout of dysentery in Delhi.

How long a leave?

My next point I should like to see made both to faculty members and to their administrators. It is that one year should not be the sacred length for a leave. I believe that a year is less than enough to let the government get its due return from us and that two years would be far better. My own university let me go for two and a half, at government request, and I am grateful. I know that I did better at the end of my term than at the beginning.

My final point is a touchy one. By way of preliminary I want to say that we should do all we can to improve the process of government security checking. We should work for more sensible laws and regulations. But the problem itself cannot be ignored. I think the government has the right to assure itself, beyond reasonable doubt, that its prospective employees are loyal. Why not? The problem to me lies in the clumsiness of some of the procedures. It is also, in effect, a problem of personalities. Few of us counsel our best students to go into the FBI, for instance. We feel a policeman's lot is not a happy one. And so if the young investigator who asks our neighbors about us is a bit brash, I propose that we make allowances. The whole business of the Form 57 is tedious and at times irritating, but I see nothing better in sight at the moment. In this respect and others the government pays the penalty for great size. Universities are also beginning to. Those of us who see our classes swell every semester should be sympathetic. No chairman of freshman English, for example, should tell an instructor what or how to teach, but if you have 300 sections some regulation, even some regimentation, is inevitable. I think we should be understanding.

The academic man is going to be needed more by government, I believe, rather than less. What I am asking of my colleagues is that if they are approached about a government appointment, they listen. And that if they take it, they recognize that a government bureau is not the same thing as the department of English. If they do this, I think they can anticipate a memorable experience. At its worst it will be occasional boredom and frustration. At its best it will be a resource to draw on for the rest of their career.

CARL BODE

Bureau of Appointments

Members are reminded that the CEA Bureau of Appointments operates on a twelve-month basis. Rgistration is $2.00 to members; the service is free to department chairmen and deans. Address correspondence to the Bureau, Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey.

Behind The Word

What kind of talks on language will a radio audience listen to? From June, 1959, to December, 1960, or for eighteen months, I gave about 225 talks over Westinghouse Station WBZ, Boston, on various phases of language, of the English language in particular. The talks were broadcast on evenings during the week, between 8:30 and 10:00— a good time for reception. WBZ, with its Boston and Springfield outlets, is one of the more powerful stations in the country. My geographical coverage was such that hundreds of letters came in response from fifteen or sixteen states, including California, Iowa, Maine, and Georgia. My listeners varied from a man in a Vermont prison to university professors and students, from Catholic Brothers to Protestant clergymen, from farmers to engineers and businessmen, from an eighty-four-year-old man in Virginia to public-school boys and girls, and further included editors and publishers. Besides the letters and cards from different states, hundreds of oral expressions have come from people near by.

I do not flatter myself with any idea that my talks added much, if anything, to the sum total of knowledge. It must be remembered that I was governed largely by the interest of my listeners and by their willingness to listen— it is plain that they did listen. Below is a sample of my talks (the man addressed as Bob is Bob Nelson, director of PROGRAM PM, of which my talks, under the title "Behind the Word," were a part).

Here's an interesting letter from Miss L. Wilcox of Attleboro, Massachusetts, who writes thus: "Has the word **victuals** (v-i-c-t-u-a-l-s) ever been used in the English language except with the word **license**? I seldom see it in printed material. Recently I saw it in my town paper, Joe Martin's North Attleboro **Chronicle**, "victuallers license." Why the two I's in **victuallers**?

"P.S. When I was a child 70 years ago, my grandmother would call the hound-dog to come and eat his victuals, which was scraps from the table with johnny-cakes."

In my boyhood fifty years ago on that Georgia farm, I frequently heard and used the word **victuals** (pronounced "vittles"), with reference especially to cooked food. Many a time I heard my mother use such an expression as "Cover up the victuals," and in my mind's eye, still quite plain, is a picture of our table with prepared food on it, all covered over with a cloth. On the table and under the cloth, along with the cooked food, was usually a quart bottle standing erect, with a cork, corn-cob, or paper stopper in it, and containing sugar-cane syrup, which was a very important staple of food with us. The erect bottle, standing up above the other dishes on the table, would hold up the cloth like a miniature circus tent from touching the food in the open dishes. The main purpose of the cloth over the victuals was not to keep out dust and inorganic particles, but to ward off swarms of flies. In those days we had no screens over doors and windows to keep out flies and mosquitoes, both of which bred and circulated in swarming profusion. My father made and installed screens later on (about 1917), when I was some thirteen years old, and then our home was one of the few in the rural community to have such protection.

Pardon me if I was carried away with such memories. Yes, there were the victuals on the table. Victuals were also sometimes taken along in a cylindrical tin pail, and they were one's lunch which, however, we usually called "dinner"; and the pail we almost never called "pail" but "bucket," so that we had "dinner-buckets." And incidently, if you had asked any of us then to spell **victuals**, I feel quite sure that the answer would have been v-i-t-t-l-e-s — well, now, my mother probably would have said v-i-c-t-u-a-l-s, because she had gone through the sixth grade and the old Blueback Speller. Moreover, we seldom used the singular **victual**, but usually the plural **victuals**.

Webster's New World Dictionary of 1959 defines the noun **victual** as 'food or other provisions,' but it labels this use of the word archaic or dialectal. Then it defines the plural **victuals** as 'articles of food, especially when prepared for use,' and then labels this use dialectal or colloquial. **Victual** the verb, it defines as 'to supply with victuals' or 'to lay in or take on a supply of food,' and it accepts both these definitions as standard English; but it labels as rare or archaic the definition 'to eat or feed.'

Victual is an old word. It came through Old French from Latin **victus**, meaning 'food,' and it seems to have entered English by 1303, since which time, according to the **Oxford English Dictionary**, the noun itself has been spelled in print over 80 different ways! It was already being spelled with **t-t** rather than with **c-t** in the fifteenth century.

In answer to Miss Wilcox's question about the two I's in **victualler**, the form with two I's is the one given by the **Oxford** as standard— but this reflects British usage. The **Dictionary of American English** indicates an American preference for the form with a single l, although, strangely enough, in three of the five quotations given by this dictionary, the word is spelled with two l's.

Since 1377, according to the **Oxford**, **victualler** has meant a 'purveyor or supplier of victuals or provisions'; and the expression **licensed victualler** has been used since 1824. Since before 1572 **victualler** has also meant 'a ship employed to carry provisions for a fleet or squadron (or for troops over-seas).'

H. L. Mencken in **Supplement One** to his book **The American Language** reports a tendency for **victualer** (with one l) to be used as a euphemism for **grocer**. So maybe in my old age I'll be eating victuals again, from the victualer's.

JAMES T. BARRS
Northeastern University

NOTE: The above talk, broadcast over WBZ at 8:28 p.m. on December 15, 1960, constitutes the first in a series that will appear in **The CEA Critic** during 1961. — Ed.

Now Available

HUCKLEBERRY FINN: Text, Sources, and Criticism. Edited by KENNETH S. LYNN. Reprinted here is the complete text of this classic novel, including the fugitive "raftsmen passage" of Chapter 16. As "sources" of the novel Mr. Lynn includes examples from the humorist tradition of the "Old Southwest." In Part III he brings together important critical writings about the novel: the early unfavorable reviews, the appreciative essay of William Dean Howells, and the contributions of such modern commentators as Van Wyck Brooks, Bernard De Voto, Lionel Trilling, T. S. Eliot, and Leo Marx. The final essay in the section is Mr. Lynn's study of Huck and Jim.

218 pages. $1.95

THE SCARLET LETTER: Text, Sources, Criticism. Edited by KENNETH S. LYNN. This standard novel for freshman English and American literature courses is presented here in its entirety. And to help elucidate it, Mr. Lynn includes "Endicott and the Red Cross" and entries from **The American Notebook**, as well as examples of important Hawthorne criticism. The latter includes reviews by George B. Loring and Orestes A. Brownson, critical estimates by Anthony Trollope and Henry James, and three modern critical statements by D. H. Lawrence, Yvor Winters, and F. O. Matthiessen.

217 pages. $1.95

To Be Published This Spring

ENGLISH AS LANGUAGE: Backgrounds, Development, Usage. Edited by CHARLTON LAIRD and ROBERT M. GORRELL. This extensive collection of source materials — samples of English from Anglo-Saxon times to the present — gives the student a unique opportunity to see for himself how our language develops and changes. The editorial commentary is planned to stimulate study of the major issues in language: the introductions to each part suggest the significance of the selections, and, following each part, are questions for discussion and questions that serve as springboards for investigations, reports, or brief papers.

Publication: April, 1961

THE QUESTION OF SOCRATES. Edited by RICHARD LEVIN. The accounts of Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon — the three eyewitnesses whose works have survived — form the principal sources of this book, each presenting a strikingly different picture of Socrates. The editor has chosen his selections to reveal as much as possible about the character of Socrates, his method of inquiry, and his relationships to the community, rather than to present a full discussion of his philosophy. The book will thus be within the grasp of the freshman who has had no formal training in philosophy.

Publication: May, 1961

HARCOURT, BRACE & WORLD, INC.

New York Burlingame

AN IMAGE

(Continued from page 1)

Another list, this time of subjects, including English literature, taught at universities, along with one-word descriptions of what might be gained from their study.

A question which asked what profession the person answering the question would want his son to enter, if he had one.

A question asking the least and most useful of the university courses listed.

Then with this out of the way, the questionnaire created a blank landscape in a bar with five nonentities — a neat, shy, shabby but courageous man, a quietly authoritative, moderately well dressed man, a loud man, a steady drinking man, and a friendly mediating man.

Then the questionnaire listed five occupations, including an English teacher, and asked which of the nonentities fitted each of the jobs listed, insurance adjustor, union official, printing foreman, English teacher, small business man.

Followed, a series of questions about the five men, which one did not believe in God, which was most pious, which doted on his mother, which hated his father, which was most radical, which would soon leave town, which was childless, which had the lowest income, which had the highest income, which one had a mistress as well as a wife.

Without claiming anything for my results, I can say that English teachers turned out here very much the way they did in the interviews I conducted. Words like decent, useful, average were used to describe them, the same words that were used to describe gas station managers, machinists, words that describe inoffensive, anonymous faces in a crowd.

Descriptions of English courses in college were words which suggested to me at least that none of the people I laid hold of had any useful convictions about why English is taught in schools, except to enable people to communicate with one another.

None of the questionnaires suggested that English literature might be the most useful subject one could study at a university, but then no one suggested that it might be the least useful either.

There was one surprise in the compilation of the answers to the questions about the figures in a contemporary landscape.

For the most part English teachers were categorized either as shy, shabby, courageous men or authoritative, well dressed types. The most sophisticated respondents imagined their English teachers shabby; the less sophisticated, well dressed. Again the more urbane people rated the English teacher as the poorest of the five people in the bar, but otherwise no one considered English teachers as striking figures. They were not regarded as the most likely to travel, as most doting on their mothers, etc., most resentful of their fathers, or most radical. When the moment came for my respondents at least to imagine and hold steadily in their minds someone with a definite characteristic, the English teacher simply ceased to exist.

Except for one small image. College women who filled out the questionnaires identified the English teacher as the man in the bar who had both a wife and a girl friend. So far as I could determine the logical route to this judgement proceeded from the thought that because of the greater articulateness of the English teacher compared with the other four men in the bar, and his greater cultural equipment, it would be more likely that he would, through his magnetic verbal capacities, have picked up the spare woman, this, despite the lowest income in the group.

In general you might say that the image of the English teacher in the mirror behind the bar is that of an anonymous, unidentifiable person who, however, is not without attraction for educated ladies on account of what they consider to be his articulateness.

While he savors his drink and considers the figure in the pattern made by homosexuality and heterosexuality warping and woofing their way through twelve centuries of English and American literature, it is possible to consider this type from another location.

For example, if you stand on the steps of the Library of Congress looking across the street into the trees at the half shielded Capitol you will recall other evidence, I think, to support the somewhat ridiculous findings that have emerged from my pseudoscientific survey.

No President of the United States has ever been an English teacher, not a single member of the Congress today is a recognizable English teacher, though two of the worst people on the Hill at one time were speech teachers. Among the so-called culture heroes President Kennedy invited to the Inauguration, there was no single professional English teacher apart from novelists or poets who are assimilated English teachers. Not even in those areas which are supposed to lie in the province of English teachers are they accorded any standing.

Now I am not compiling these details to minimize the profession of English teaching. Actually, I hope I am doing something very different.

While I was putting these notes down there was an election to a chair of English at Oxford that was attended by a tremendous excitement, which was reported in the world press, and which ended eventually in Robert Graves' succession to W. H. Auden. No such interest attaches to English appointments in the U. S. If it is true that within the last decade a half dozen English teachers have acquired national prominence, this recognition has come not really to English teachers, but rather to television actors.

The fact is the culture broth that is served up to Americans is a very thin soup indeed compared to the fare in France or Germany or England or the Scandinavian countries. The sense many observers have of American life that the culture lacks the texture, the richness, the depth and the other qualities only a national concern for literature can impart is due largely to the neglect by the American people of their literature.

Succinctly, the anonymity of the English teacher in America is an expression of the emptiness of the culture.

Without documentation or proof I wish to make a series of assertions which are more or less self evident to me, perhaps not to you, but which I suggest you deal with on your own time.

Taken together they ascend to some conclusions about English teaching in the United States and what the image of the

STRUCTURE IN READING AND WRITING

Russel Nye, Michigan State University
Wilma R. Ebbitt, University of Chicago

with a supplement on improving reading ability

by James E. Day, Long Beach State College

A collection of contemporary essays and articles, with an introduction, questions, and theme topics which emphasize the importance of organizational pattern for both reader and writer.

Softbound
5-1/2 by 8-3/8
352 pages
List Price $2.25

Scott, Foresman and Company
CHICAGO
ATLANTA
DALLAS
PALO ALTO
FAIR LAWN, N.J.

Recent McGraw-Hill Books

AMERICAN LITERATURE: A College Survey
Edited by Clarence A. Brown, Marquette University; and John T. Flanagan, University of Illinois.
853 pages, $7.95.

STORIES FROM SIX AUTHORS
Edited by William E. Buckler, New York University; and Arnold B. Sklare, Pace College.
512 pages, $3.95.

ON ASSIGNMENT: Reading and Writing
By Herbert Hackett and William D. Baker, State University of New York, Buffalo.
339 pages, $3.25.

McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc.
330 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N.Y.

Mr. Lewis Carliner, speaker at the Greater New York CEA meeting, Adelphi College, March 18, 1961. In the background is program chairman and incoming regional president Edward Huberman (Rutgers Newark).

English teacher is not, but should be.

Knowledge, enjoyment, appreciation, awareness, and a concern for literature are over the nation almost nonexistent.

The inherited richness of literature, which is in the street air of Paris or Stockholm or London, does not begin to touch and color politics, the daily life, the common speech, the reaction to great events in this country to the same degree as in most European countries.

Yet it is through the national literature, not through social studies or synoptic courses in history, or through courses in government and civics, by growing up immersed in the nation's poetry, its novels, its epics, its essays, by living contemporaneously with Cooper and Melville, Poe and Whitman, Vachel Lindsay and Robert Lowell, or their similars in other countries, that a people acquire a group national identity. Through literature, poetry, plays, novels, short stories, essays the U 2 pilots or soldiers in Korea could have acquired a sense of what being American is all about and could have drawn strength and understanding from the perception. Information and Education officers attached to infantry regiments or air bases can never make up to young men or women what has escaped them through the central holes in the culture.

What I am suggesting is that whatever is live, is organic, is compelling, is galvanizing or kindling about a culture is found in its literature, and the English teachers, wherever they are, and whatever their state, are tenders of the life impulse and the flame.

In France, as you know, the nurture of this is a serious and central something that is both fire and current concern of the culture. The language itself is carefully watched over by designated guardians, literature textbooks are sedulously and officially compiled out of the stream of publications and they are edited continuously to insure that the movement and development of the ideas and sensibilities as they find expression in books are incorporated in the texts young people study.

Very much has been made in this country in recent years of the discontinuities between the many cultures in the United States. Minimum wage laws, FEPC rules, equality in education are essential but the final hope of growing organic understanding over the abysses must come through a presentation as soon as his eyes open to the shape of letters to every young American of the common experiences, the common understanding, the ancient riches that, savored in the literature, could give everyone in each of the ages an absolutely unmalleable resistance to any kind of pernicious mass cultural pressure to prejudice.

Far more than the nation needs additional engineers, a multiplication of mathematicians, or an increase of chemists, it needs regiments of more and better dragon-toothed English teachers. Somewhere at the center, perhaps emanating from the Library of Congress, perhaps from a national commission, perhaps from a galvanized and transformed PMLA or College English Association gone berserk with urgency, we must suddenly become aware that the society is unravelling on the edges of the hole where a concern with literature ought to be.

Yet if an academy should be established or a commission appointed, the chances are that today even though its concern would be English and American literature, the chances are the people appointed will be Harvard economists or lawyers, MIT physicists or business men or associates of Frank Sinatra.

Perhaps the theory would be that if literature is all this important, it is too serious a thing to be entrusted to English teachers.

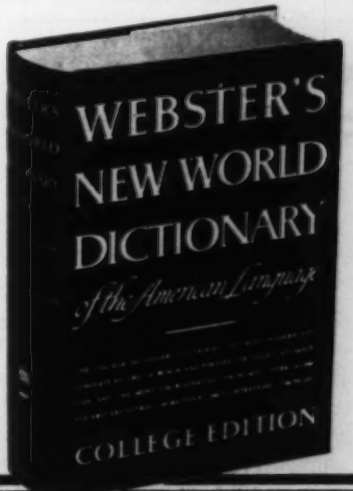
If you return to the bar where the English teacher has almost disappeared into the crepuscule, once your eyes become accustomed to the gloom it is obvious that not only don't the four other men there recognize the stature and mission of the English teacher but the English teacher himself has not heard the voices that should furnish him with his inspiration to

(Please turn to page 11)

K

Among other things, K is a Roman numeral for 250; in **chemistry**, it is the symbol for potassium; in **mathematics**, a symbol for constant; in **meteorology**, a symbol for cumulus. In **assaying**, it stands for carat (also spelled **karat**).

If you look in a **modern** dictionary, you will find all this information and more, following the K entry. In assaying a **modern** dictionary you will find that **every entry** is freshly defined — with clarity and directness — for the times in which we live. If you're still plodding with a horse-and-buggy dictionary put together years ago, you'll be delightfully surprised at the many illuminating and informative things contained in a **modern** dictionary.



NEWEST! BIGGEST! 142,000 entries
1,760 pages • 3,100 terms illustrated
In various bindings from $5.75

Officially approved at more than 1,000 leading colleges and universities

THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY
Cleveland 2, Ohio

A Note On Chaucer's Obscenity

"This Nicholas was risen for to
pisse,
And thoghte he wolde amenden al the
jape;
He sholde kisse his ers er that he
scape.
And up the wyndowe dide he hastily,
And out his ers he putteth pryvely
Over the buttok, to the haunche-bon;
And therwith spak this clerk, this
Absolon,
'Spek, sweete bryd, I noot nat wher
thou art.'
This Nicholas anon leet fle a fart,
As greet as it had been a thonder-
dent."

In this somewhat light-hearted piece I would like to make one useful distinction between real and alleged obscenity, in the hope that it might offer aid and comfort to those who splinter an occasional lance against undergraduate Comstockery. In this spirit, there follows an illustration of what happens to a lively excerpt from the Miller's Tale when it is translated into a bare-bones plot. (Nicholas rose to answer a call of nature, thinking that he would elaborate upon the joke a little. He [Absolon] would have to kiss his arse before he escaped. Nicholas raised the window quickly and put out his arse so that his buttocks were extended as far as mid-thigh. At this point Absolon spoke saying, "Speak, sweet bird; I don't know where you are." Then Nicholas loudly broke wind).

Dull? Ordinary? Obscene? Certainly the first two terms apply and possibly also the last. The translation in no sense differs from the standard, smoke-filled-room dirty joke. It lacks even the amusing quality that such jokes sometimes have because I have intentionally omitted the "punch line"; or rather, what would be a punch line in such stories. That the story in Chaucer's version really is funny, and that portions of it are equally so cannot be doubted by the pure in heart; and I stress portions, of course, in order to make the point that its unique quality does not depend on plot alone.

Now—it is at least possible for us to conjure up a list of odious scenes. For instance, imagine the spectacle of a fat man whose only occupation is a very noticeable, very odoriferous wind-breaking at the rate of one explosion per second. Let us assume, also, that he insists on doing this for weeks at a time. Searching out the essential ingredients of this, our not very palatable little vision, is a task of small difficulty. I would suggest that the ingredients are **real** nastiness and **real** monotony. It seems to me equally clear that Chaucer's material often borders on this sort of thing, and even more clear, however, that obscenity is not a relevant issue. Conventionally enough, I would suggest that all humor depends upon surprise (stop me if you've heard this one) and the incongruous. "Off-color" material has a universal appeal because of its attention to bodily function. Like hunger, lust and related matters are facts.

The relevant problem for the humorist here is to allow us a chance to enjoy our own beastliness without at the same time reminding us of it. Chaucer succeeds because he is able to remove the reality from the nastiness potentially present, while he lays great stress on surprise and incongruity at the same time. True, the poet does see to it that Nicholas has his arse out the window (shocking good taste), but it is not the arse itself which receives the emphasis. This is a sensationally successful visual image because the quality stressed is the remarkable amount of **protuberance.** We are not allowed to brood about the possible griminess of arses in general. Instead, we are presented with the incongruous spectacle of Nicholas' backside decorating the night air like a great white flower, like the inviting target it is so shortly to become. In a similar way it is no accident that we have here an amusing clash between the visual imagery surrounding Nicholas' arse and the spoken dialogue. There is a violent contrast between what Nicholas expects and what he is going to get. He believes, much too naively, that he is going to repeat the joke ful savourly.

In addition we are not allowed to dwell upon the potential reality of pain. In great trouble, Nicholas cries for water, and our attention is immediately drawn to the Carpenter who interprets the cries as an announcement of a second Flood. Nor is the reader allowed to brood about the potential beastliness of wind-breaking in general. With one stroke, Chaucer compares it to a "thonder-dent," thus removing the latent reality in explosions of this kind. It is a special, unique kind of **literary** explosion, and the incongruous is both intended and achieved. This explosion has all the merry surprise of a deep-throated tuba note inserted wrongfully and with sly malice into a performance by a symphony orchestra.

R. B. SMITH
Eastern Washington College

OUR LIVING LANGUAGE

Kellogg W. Hunt and **Paul Stoakes**
The Florida State University

This book is about language and its most distinguished manifestation, literature. It begins with language about language, moves on to language in literature, and concludes with language about literature.

And throughout, the book asks questions which, with disarming simplicity, lead the student to think about what he reads and to evolve critical standards by the exercise of his own judgment and appreciation.

631 pages April 1961

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY • Boston

ON READING "HOWL"

by
James McNally

Poetry's meat is not especially ham;
Everyone who bleats is not a lamb.

NOTICES OF NOTE

Anyone wishing to discover the views held about our profession by educated segments of American society would do well to check ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH TEACHING by Joseph Mersand (Philadelphia and New York: Chilton Company, 1961, $4.00). The general note of criticism is explained by Dr. Mersand thus: "Almost from the time when English became a subject to be taught in the high schools and the colleges, there have been criticisms of the results. In fact, the history of the teaching of English in America might well be called the history of the criticism of the teaching of English." Highlighted in the comments of those surveyed were the following suggestions: (1) Greater emphasis on English as the basic subject in the curriculum, (2) Better articulation of English content and methodology at all levels, (3) Greater individualization of instruction, (4) Greater emphasis on written expression, (5) Better training in reading skills and appreciation of literature, (6) More effective exploitation of the mass media of communication, (7) Clarification of grammatical and linguistic study, (8) Increased effectiveness in teacher selection and preparation.

ACD

Used in practically every college and university in the United States

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE DICTIONARY

$5.00; Thumb-Indexed, $6.00

RANDOM HOUSE
501 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N.Y.

Copyright 1961

How To Teach An "Age"

A few years ago, after I had just finished reading Walter Besant's **All Sorts and Conditions of Men,** I thought how presumptuous it was of Mr. Besant to have used "all" in his title. I think the same about "How to - " titles. Such could well be true of anyone who tries to tell his colleagues "how" to teach that literary article of virtu, the college "age" course.

An "age" course is usually named after some great figure who is thought to have had a seminal influence upon his contemporaries or his inheritors. "The Age of Elizabeth" is so named because Elizabeth I was the focal point of her day; her subjects more or less regulated their lives to her moods, manners and maunderings. The "ages" of Dryden, Pope and Johnson chronicle the rise of literary dictators. These ages are taught reverently, like Scripture, because the gentlemen after which they were named were so testy and strongminded in utterance that they frightened generations of scholars to come. "The Victorian Age" (here not the name of the queen, but the adjective that derives from her name, is seminal!) is usually taught as "The Pound Sterling Age," a snide allusion by some capitalists to the fact that "The Age of Elizabeth" is called "The Golden Age." However, all of these ages, and many others, are sometimes taught in a way that illustrates a basically false idea of what an age course should be like. This false idea makes itself felt in several ways.

In any age course, literature is certainly the main concern. The lasting literature of the age should be of more importance than the wars, financial depressions and styles in dress. Yet, the flavor of the age, as Bernard DeVoto told us, cannot be tasted in **hors d' oeuvres** of **belles-lettres.** To teach an age, a person should get into it; he should know not so much what today's critics say and feel, but what the citizens of the age said and felt. What influence did Johnson have, really, upon his **age?** How were his ideas seminal to literature? What about Pope's **Rape of the Lock?** Did many people read it in 1712? What was the response to his **Essay on Man?** Did it raise as much commotion in 1733 as it does today in the breast of one undergraduate? To teach these concepts, or elements, if you will, an instructor must read other materials that are far different from literature; he must range beyond literature to the other printed matter of the times, and imbue himself in the habits and customs of the people. He must, in a word, teach the age not as history or, worse yet, biography, but as a period that was modern and vital to those who lived in it. There is a time for twentieth century interpolation after the age is resurrected. He can quote his pet critics and quarterlies **after** the students feel the modernity and the vitality. His ability to recreate the age —although it may rest on scholarship— counts more than his depth in scholarship.

If the age is taught as history, then the instructor invariably makes the mistake of thrusting at his class an overall historical edict, or "place in history" sort of thing. Even in those ages mentioned so far, literary activity was not the most important interest of the people. To imply that an age has boundaries, such as the dates in the life of its seminal figure, is to give a one-sided impression that prohibits anything, especially literature, from coming alive. Literary scholarship tends to the clinical method. If the students get the impression that they are looking through a microscope at slides of the age, they will finish the semester in a myopic daze. The age should not be taught as though it had a signature theme. The age of Elizabeth may well have been golden, but it was a bit brazen, and salted with fool's gold, too. The Victorian age possibly was the Pound Sterling age, but it was a Pot Metal age or Cast Iron age, too.

Worse things happen when the age is taught as biography. A false idea of literature as the only thing that matters begins to grow when we let a man's reputation overwhelm us. Though Shakespeare was known as a notorious Shakescene to his fellows, if he came back to our day he could probably use as he wanted the wife of any Shakespearean scholar in the republic, so deep is our reverence of him. We should return to the old Greek idea of honoring the poem, not the poet. If the instructor is too ebullient about the seminal figure, he finds himself quite often explaining to the class why **all** of the man's work isn't quite as good as some of it.

Directly from the historical-biographical fallacy comes the attitudinal fallacy. The effect of history is seen upon the instructor. An instructor is not a twentieth century pontificator of a bygone age; he shouldn't fortify himself from the age behind a bulwark of criticisms and comments. He should at least show a good appreciation of what the literature meant when it was fresh, and how it sorted with the times in general. Even if he has a scary dream now and then at night when he is walking the streets of old Eastcheap or Soho, all to the better. If his manner, cooled and detached by scholarship, seems to say, "I shall tell you about the writings of some people who lived long ago," instead of "I'm going to tell you about an age of people and what literature meant to them," then his students may as well spend their time studying a jar of mixed pickles.

History and biography are easier to teach than literature. Curiously enough, history has more plot and action; it has GREAT DATES and GREAT DEEDS with which to parallel a course. But literature is an unfolding phenomenon. We can't lose sight of the fact that literary values change with the times. A piece of work means two different things to two different ages.

Perhaps the whole question of teaching an age can be answered by a little exercise in the Stanislavsky method. Imagine yourself — the you of today — suddenly moved ahead to a college in, say, 2161. Your assignment is to teach "The Age of Hemingway." What would you emphasize? Is Hemingway's writing a notable part of our age, or is it just an imperfectly silvered mirror which distorts us? When I consider such questions as these, I find that I am better able to put literature where it belongs, and give a more rounded picture of an age.

At least, I was able to do so until someone asked me how I would teach "The Age of Kerouac."

DOROTHY NORRIS FOOTE
San Jose State College

A Comparative Reader for College English

William W. Watt, Lafayette College

Selections by prose writers of distinction are so arranged as to stimulate students to read, think, write, and talk more intelligently. The unique arrangement and selection of material enables the student to **compare** resemblances or differences in purpose, opinion, point of view, style, tone, form, and time-spirit. Each pair of readings is prefaced by brief notes.

March 1961, 384 pp., $2.50

HOLT, RINEHART and WINSTON, Inc.
383 Madison Avenue, New York 17

New in 1961 . . .

Basic Writer and Reader

Irwin Griggs, Temple University
Rosa Bludworth, San Angelo College
Robert Llewellyn, Temple University

Both a workbook in the essentials of grammar and a collection of interesting readings, this new freshman text is designed to develop college - level skills. Numerous exercises appear in both sections. The text is paper-bound, with perforated pages.

College Division
American Book Company
55 Fifth Avenue, New York 3, New York

A LATIN DEBATE

The Warfel-Withers debate on this page presents some of the issues concerning the role of Latin in the curricu'um and its relation to English composition and grammar. A recent defense of Latin was made by Dr. Mason W. Gross, president of Rutgers University, in a speech before the 35th annual conference of the Independent Schools Education Board in New York City (See N.Y. **Times,** March 5, 1961, p. 86.). Dr. Gross recommended a revival of the study of Latin as a means of strengthening English, "our greatest academic weakness." He urged the secondary schools to bring back Latin as an aid in developing respect for words as well as a better sense of values and a more thorough grounding in English. -- Ed.

Latin-English Alliance

The best professor of English I served under as a student transferred to English from a professorship of French and German. Doubtless he knew also his Latin and his Greek, like most of his linguistic compeers of that earlier time. As professor of English, however, he paraded none of his lore in ancient or modern foreign languages, regarding them as self-evident, natural adjuncts constituting part of the basis of his training in the mother tongue.

But professors of English of the present time, in the mass, by and large, look upon Latin (I single it out as the most obvious of the "adjuncts") as quite dispensable. I say this because they never publicly mention it; and I am convinced they fear their reputations would suffer if they did. What else can keep the "believers" as well as the "unbelievers" so silent on the matter?

Only the practitioners of THE NEW are permitted on the bright, gay bandwagon of these sixties. Scientific **inventions** (see "structuralism" and the machine-made oral-aural craze) impose the order of the day, and inventors, like others of their guild in whatever line everywhere, are all downright persuaded of the infallibility of the products of their fancies. They are in their own minds the only dedicated modern seekers of the truth that shall make men free. One can applaud their enthusiasm, while insisting on discrimination, as opposed to a blind tendency to imitate, on the part of the public.

Having personally no illusions of being an inventor, and without a reputation to lose, I should like to see the English-teaching profession hark back to first principles; and these would include continued and continual attention to pure language, whatever the literary content and implications of a given course. The current abdication from responsibility for the linguistic side of literature study, with the latter's exclusive devotion to idea-discussion, is getting us nowhere fast. Why? Because by itself alone it has little or no bearing on the subsequent intellectual (i.e., communicative) stability of the student.

The story of what Latin can do linguistically for the youthful mind whose medium of communication is to be English is generally known to professors of the latter. Besides it is a long narrative, and there is no space for it here. Let us say only that to study Latin is to study English (or French, Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese, if you prefer). Let's take English out of the vacuum-tank in which it has lain so long.

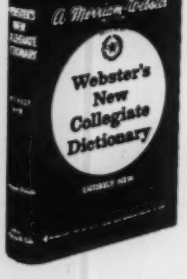
Why do we not declare a work alliance between Latin and English, assigning, say credit in English for proven ability to read in Caesar, Cicero, Vergil? The halls of English are overcrowded; those of Latin abound in usable space, as well as in waiting, yearning instructors. The thing is practical, would save time while insuring progress, would relieve in large measure teachers of both languages.

There must be something to start the youthful brain to ruminating on the things of language in succinct and continuous ways, and to maintain that vital engine on that vital track. Latin served this function in America up to the time when the "progressives" took over. We shall have to get back to it eventually. Why therefore the oppressive silence on the subject, even on the part of those who "believe?"

A. M. WITHERS
Concord College

A STUDENT'S KEY TO NEW HORIZONS IN UNDERSTANDING

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary



While missiles soar from the launching pads of Cape Canaveral to explore the mysteries of space, Merriam researchers are tracking their course through the printed page and spoken utterances to detect new words and meanings.

As living records of our changing language, Merriam-Webster dictionaries are uniquely suited to help students in their study of our complex civilization.

G. & C. MERRIAM COMPANY
SPRINGFIELD 2, MASS.

What About Latin?

Latin was the language of scholarship at the time grammars to the vulgates were prepared. It was natural to assume that the standard of language performance was found in Latin and possibly in Greek. But Greek obviously was too complicated. And, anyway, all that was in the Greek vocabulary came via Latin into English. That is, it did until the expanding scientific vocabulary led to the creation of new words out of Greek and Latin roots, combining forms, and affixes. All have been made, by the way, on English principles.

As long as grammars of meaning are written, Greek and Latin will continue to seem important, because a vocabulary is considered a language. On this basis our schoolbooks did and still do stress classical polysyllabic words as the royal road to learning. The helter-skelter nature of these exercises seems not to annoy proponents of Latin. Nor does any of these propagandists say anything about the true nature of the operation of vocabulary in a language code. Latin must be wonderful, they say, because Latin provides a lot of vocabulary.

When the grammar of English is examined in terms of its operating principles, it will be seen that only one possible Latin formula was added to the Germanic mode of language procedure: the formation of the comparative and positive degree by **more** and **most.** But in all likelihood only the vocabulary items came from Latin; the method was inherent in Primitive Germanic. All else from Latin is in the vocabulary. **Cum, per, re,** and **via** are items that fit the English prepositional system and do not require the Latin mode of phrase formation. The prefixes and suffixes work according to English requirements. In the code, therefore, Latin really plays no **role.**

The overemphasis upon Latin has led to a number of serious errors in grammatical study. For example, nearly every grammarian nowadays echoes, as does Robert Pooley, the notion that "English, to be accurate, has only two tenses, a present and a past" (**The English Language Arts,** p. 278). This statement is made on the basis that, because Latin is an inflected language, English ought to be, and any deviation from inflectional procedures must be deemed a shortcoming.

The fact is that English is a compositional language. The addition of the **more** and **most** formula is a case in point; because every adjective and adverb open to comparison can use the compositional formula, some grammarians are saying that the inflected forms are dying out. The loss of the present-tense verb endings **-est** and **-eth** is accompanied by the decreasing use of one-word verbs in the present tense. By contrast there has been the creation of the progressive and emphatic tense forms and also the compositional forms made with the new auxiliaries **get, go, keep, need, start,** and others. Also there is the proliferation of the formula of the verb-plus-adverb combination, as in **get up, put up, shut up.** Seldom remarked upon is the nature of the noun and verb compositional formulas like **army missile base investigation** and **I kept acknowledging requiring obeying.**

Most of the foregoing facts are in the Lloyd-Warfel **American English in Its Cultural Setting,** against whose authors A. M. Withers is conducting a self-generated vendetta. A grammarian who prefers to demonstrate the nature of the English system must keep silent about the Latin in order not to confuse the issue with students who know no Latin. There is, however, no excuse that makes it forgivable for a Latinist like Withers to remain ignorant of the differences between English and Latin structural principles.

HARRY R. WARFEL
University of Florida

NOTICES OF NOTE

In a report, **The Torch Lighters: Tomorrow's Teachers of Reading**, a Harvard study group, headed by Dr. Mary C. Austin, points out that in most cases the best college students are not interested in a teaching career. Those that select education as their choice do not receive enough course work in the teaching of reading and, what is worse, they often are sent to local schools to "practice teach" under the guidance of a teacher who frequently uses outdated techniques.

Unfortunately, says the report, many of these neophyte teachers receive no further assistance after graduation since few school principals and supervisors are trained to guide the beginning teacher in matters of reading content or performance.

To improve present conditions the Harvard group points out that the quality of would-be-teachers must first be improved. They recommend tighter admission policies to education courses and a revision of curriculum requirements.

To improve practice teaching programs the study staff advocates more vigorous recruitment and training of those local school teachers who direct the activities of the student during the apprenticeship experience to insure that the term "master" teacher applies in fact as well as in name. Furthermore, Dr. Austin and her colleagues suggest that changes be made in the evaluation of the work students do during their practice teaching so that a passing grade will not be given perfunctorily but will indicate that the student really is competent to teach reading and other elementary grade skills.

In an effort to improve the quality of reading instruction in local school systems, the study staff feels that colleges must offer courses in "the teaching of reading" especially designed for school principals, supervisors, and other administrative personnel. They also recommend that teacher training colleges appoint a liaison person to work directly with local school systems.

The Torch Lighters, which is published by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, can be obtained from Harvard University Press for one dollar.

"The first definitive research materials text on an important aspect of Catholic thinking in America."

—Bishop John J. Wright

American Catholicism and the Intellectual Ideal

Edited by **Francis L. Christ,** Loyola College, Baltimore;
and
Gerard E. Sherry, Central California Register

Appleton-Century-Crofts
34 W. 33rd St., New York 1

CHAP BOOKS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Requests for CEA Chap Books have outstripped the supply in several instances, but the following are still available to members. Free copies, on a first come, first served basis, may be ordered from the Editor, Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey.

2. THE TWO SCANDALS OF CRITICISM by Theodore Morrison Mar. 1942
4. THE SURVIVAL-QUOTIENT IN TEACHING LITERATURE by Paul Landis Mar. 1948
5. POETRY AND GENERAL EDUCATION by Gordon Keith Chalmers Sept. 1948
6. THE MAN OF LETTERS AND AMERICAN CULTURE by Ludwig Lewisohn May 1949
7. WHAT DOES THE NATURE OF LITERATURE REQUIRE OF ITS INTERPRETERS? by Ernest Bernbaum Jan. 1950
8. AN INVASION OF PRIVACY by Robert T. Fitzhugh Apr. 1951
10. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TEACHER OF LITERATURE TO THE HUMANITIES May 1951
11. TWO OR THREE IDEAS by Wallace Stevens Oct. 1951
13. CEA SYMPOSIUM (Annual Meeting) Dec. 1954
14. THE FOLKLORE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION by Francis H. Horn [Reprinted from **AAUP Bulletin** XLI (March 1955)] Mar. 1955

"Experiment or Perish?"

(Continued from page 1)

psychological principles known to good teachers at least since the time of Quintillian and given an immense new boost by the combination of the needs and the resources of our affluent and technological society.

Departments of English have an unparalleled opportunity for shedding traditional clogs and drudgery, and breaking into a brave new era in education. If they repudiate this opportunity, the penalty is very likely to be first inundation, and then relegation to a minor role in tomorrow's colleges and universities. And tinkering with the curriculum requirements or multiplying space and people merely for doing more of the same will not even preserve the **status quo**, let alone advance our cause. "There is a tide in the affairs of men . . . ."

BRUCE DEARING

Essay Test for Composition

Recent news from New York State is encouraging to those who have labored over the last few years on the CEA Committee on General Composition Standards. For the committee from its outset pushed hard for an essay test as a means of strengthening training in composition during the high school years.

Last year, against the opposition of the Educational Testing Service and many in the College Entrance Examination Board itself, a group of New England colleges succeeded in re-establishing an essay test within the battery of CEEB examinations. The setting up of an English Commission of the CEEB under old CEA-er Floyd Rinker was further evidence that the entrenched forces of the multiple choice test were losing ground.

Now one reads that the NY State English Council has been meeting with success on the issue of essays. The NY **Times** (April 6, 1961, p. 35) carries the news that the NY State Department of Education will ask the Board of Regents to include an examination in English composition in the high school Regents tests.

As Fred Hechinger reports in his **Times** article "The council's recommendation for essay work in the Regents examination follows widespread complaints by teachers that objective tests, mainly multiple-choice questions, were driving writing requirements out of the schools."

Even this victory is partial, for it will be two years before the essay test can be applied to the 120,000 students who take the Regents annually.

A new handbook with the little "extra" to help students **understand** . . .

PRACTICAL ENGLISH HANDBOOK

Floyd C. Watkins and Edwin T. Martin
Emory University

● clear and positive explanations ● graphic aids ● examples and exercises of intrinsic interest ● first aid for gross errors ● coverage of essentials, not minutiae

430 pages March 1961

Houghton Mifflin
BOSTON NEW YORK ATLANTA
GENEVA, ILL. DALLAS PALO ALTO

Of Liberty and License

If you look under Title 18 (Sections 1415, 1563) of the **United States Code**, you will find federal regulations governing the mailing of obscene literature. Under Title 39 (Section 259A), the Postmaster General has the power to issue "unlawful orders" and to hold independent hearings on questions of violation of the "Obscene Literature" statute. No less a person than the U. S. Attorney General customarily prosecutes the large publishers who have been so investigated. Indeed, the postal authorities have currently been very sensitive about the entire subject, due to the fact that traffic in obscene literature is now a $5,000,000 business, with probable gangster control, and is frequently aimed at sales to adolescents.

If you look in your daily newspapers, you will find that state and local officials are also endeavoring to restrain the sales of various magazines, specifically those that contain photographs of nude figures. The subject is one that cannot fail to gain public attention for investigating officials — public attention and, perhaps, votes in the next elections.

What is censorship today? Does it, or does it not, violate the freedom of the press which teachers of English, and certainly members of the CEA, vigorously endorse? In the matter of censorship, have institutions of public law fallen behind custom and acceptance? Can you— **o tempera, o mores**!— admit to sufficient age to recall when a copy of **Ulysses** (Joyce's, that is) had to be smuggled into the United States?

I pose these questions more for your private rumination than for a present answer. In fact, this is a moment at which I expect you to mutter to yourself certain cogent, if impolite, comments about gratuitous and narrow-minded censorship. But wait! Are you not growling in generalizations?

(Supply the transition for me here while I hurry on.)

And just what do you say to your students about sex in literature? You have lived long enough to praise authors whose treatment of sex is frank and naturalistic and to admit them to the high place in literature that they deserve. What, then, do you tell your classes about the literary value, or non-value, of Kerouac and his followers— the Denizens? Are you a Professor Utopus of Hythloday Hall?

(Another transition, please.)

* * *

What do you say when an astute attorney— call him Mr. Ambitio, criminal lawyer **par excellence**— asks you to take the witness stand and testify to the non-obscenity of one or more magazines under prosecution?

Mr. Ambitio seats you, perhaps, in his elegant rooms and offers you an expensive cigar. For your benefit, he changes the records on his new stereophonic. While he is doing so, you look at the photograph of his good family and the Daumier prints on the walls, wondering to yourself why you let your own bachelor-of-laws fall into disuse for the bright chimera of literary studies. You admire the good tailoring of his clothes while he talks tough-minded and crusading things about freedom of the press and while he assures you of the community services made by your college, Hythloday Hall (and of the community's financial reciprocity). Finally, he spreads across his handsome desk the magazines he defends. What a contrast is their bold gaiety and the discreet and materialistic dignity!

Has he, you ask, multiple clients? No, only a poor vendor, enjoined from their sale. His client, however, will pay your plane-fare to the locus of the trial, and also the cost of your room and meals in a luxury-hotel. You both dislike, Mr. Ambitio insists, insidious infringements of freedom, and together you crusade. Ridiculous to call the magazines obscene! Pornography, now... have you ever seen, in the course of your quiet "professoring," real, graphic pornography?

Your mind turns vaguely to the things you know about "smokers" or furtively sold pictures; and you are uncomfortably aware that you are Spartan-living and simply idealistic Professor Utopus. You even glance back at young Utopus admiring the facade of Notre Dame de Paris— admiring it, that is, until the stuffy moment of brushing aside that wretched street-merchant who tweaked at your sleeve.

You leaf through the questionable magazines.

The whole— the dominant theme, Mr. Ambitio assures you— has to appeal to the prurient instincts of the average person; otherwise there is no violation....

The magazines are not obscene. He will win his case. Some of the nudes are as saccharine as "September Morn." The advertisements, too, and the filler are innocent. There is even a touch of humor: a black, tailored bow on a bare **derriere**, in a burlesque of current feminine styles. (You, Raphael T. M. Utopus, recall old illustrations in college-humor magazines.) There are pin-up girls of the type issued annually by men's magazines that enjoy large and unquestioned circulation. Yet a few pages in each issue.... Following pictures that you would not— well, take home to your wife and daughter— are charming articles on general subjects— motherhood among them. Dominant theme?

You leave the attorney's office with a firm step. Obscenity indeed! Abuse of legal process, you tell yourself, has gone far enough! Freedom of the press is freedom of the press and every self-serving official should be prevented from manufacturing cases for headline news. Probably your own testimony will have at least a small line of review: "Dr. Utopus, Professor of English Literature at Hythloday Hall... says magazines not lewd and lascivious." Some of the trustees may object, but the President is a sincere and aggressive man, never slow to declare himself for a right cause. Your students, too—

Students? What a buzz there will be among them! You can hear the very echo of their comments: "Old Tope really did it... stood up for sex in print! Let's get a lot of 'off-beat' mags, see? And bring 'em in to class.... Everyone get one, huh? And ask The Great Stone Face how they fit in with all that guff he's been giving us... you know, about sex being a part of the story, or something...."

The sun is not quite so bright by the time you extricate your 1956 model from the low-priced parking lot. You ate too

New!

Workbook for Understanding English

by Paul Roberts

A set of fifty exercises, many quite different from the usual kind, designed to supplement Roberts' familiar text, UNDERSTANDING ENGLISH; linguistic science is here combined with the practical matters of the freshman composition course. 122 pp. $1.50

Harper & Brothers
49 E. 33d St., N.Y. 16, N.Y.

OXFORD BOOKS FOR FRESHMAN ENGLISH

Whicher and Ahnebrink
TWELVE AMERICAN POETS
1961 200 pp. paperbound $1.50

Doremus
WRITING COLLEGE THEMES
1960 168 pp. paperbound $1.50

Williams
PHONETIC SPELLING FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS
1960 176 pp. paperbound $2.95

Kane and Peters
WRITING PROSE
Techniques and Purposes
1959 347 pp. paperbound $2.95

Dean and Wilson
ESSAYS ON LANGUAGE AND USAGE
1959 344 pp. paperbound $2.50

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York 16

much of Ambitio's gourmet food— served in his office, no less— and your feet hurt from the long walk. That background material you intended to brief for your evening class in humanities— the idealistic search for man's dignity in the universe— seems oddly remote now. You regret the loss of two hours in the middle of the day, as the result of a polite summons through proper channels to the office of a well-known attorney.

The next morning, you take another aspirin. If your wife's guests had not stayed so late, you would have slept more soundly. If you had gotten up earlier, from a night of genuine rest, you would not have missed your first hour of reading— that new book on the invulnerability of the human spirit and **The CEA Critic**, with its forensic fights for teaching ideals.

Teaching ideals! Hastily you swallow your coffee and uncover your typewriter. You have a letter to write to that attorney. When you jerk the copy from the machine, you realize you were a trifle angry while you composed it. It is no literary gem. No matter, it makes your point:

Dear Mr. Ambitio:

Since our pleasant conversation of yesterday, I have thoughtfully considered your request and have reached the conclusion that I would be a very poor witness.

With all my heart, I believe in freedom of the press and would never be afraid to take a stand for it, no matter what the incidental publicity. Though I cannot speak officially for Hythloday Hall, I am certain the school where I teach would have a like attitude toward freedom in publication.

However, I do not believe the issue in your case is squarely, or even primarily, one of freedom of the press. A very real question in your case concerns the right of individuals to make a profit by trading upon "sexiness." Let me explain this statement and the reason I am out of sympathy with the publications.

I do not consider any one of the magazines obscene, in the legal definition of the term. Each journal has a carefully innocuous cover and juxtaposes to a nude picture some such sweetness-and-light photographic essay as that of a young mother playing with her children. Yet each contains two or three pictures that are definitely designed to arouse sexual response. It is my belief that the publishers include as much sex "as they can get away with," for the express purpose of making profit for themselves.

"Sexiness" is not obscenity. As I said, I do not consider the magizines technically obscene. But if I were to testify as to their non-obscenity, my remarks could be interpreted elsewhere as a tacit endorsemnt of their quality. Perhaps my students would so interpret them.

I made a teacher of myself— not an attorney— though the latter is a far more lucrative profession. In order to be a teacher at such a school as Hythloday Hall, I earned graduate degrees, which have their own disciplines, ethics, and integrities. My first loyalty is thus to my students and to the intellectual and moral things I represent to them.

As a teacher of literature and of writing, I clarify—— when asked about it— the question of sex in published materials. There is, for example a wide range of sexual frankness in the stories of Faulkner and those of other fine writers. I even discuss, if the students raise the question, such novels as **Peyton Place.** Nor am I hesitant to do so, for my answers are invariably the same: if the sexual incident is legitimately and intrinsically a part of the story and of a realistic presentation of human conflict, then "it belongs." If the sex has been inserted for mere sensationalism and to add a factor of popular salability, then it is cheap and unnecessary.

The magazines you are defending do not measure up to this standard. Their "sexiness" is, in my opinion, included to increase the sale of the publication. Though I am sympathetic to some of the so-called "beatnik" literature, I have been guilty of telling my students that "liberty is not license," a principal followed by most of the publications on our stands.

I may seem prudish and old-fashioned to you. Yet you will agree that it is not my teacher's place to endorse, by implication, the quality of the magazines you defend, or thus to aid your clients in the protection of personal property. The discipline of the teacher is sometimes a strait harness, resting deeply and genuinely in an obligation to those young people whom one instructs.

Sincerely yours,
Raphael T. M. Utopus
Professor of English

You check your statement critically. Yes, it is wordy and a trifle pompous. But you stuff it in an envelope and grimly unearth a stamp. You'll be blessed, you assure yourself, if Mr. Ambitio can so casually and cavalierly help himself to the prestige of Hythloday Hall, or for that matter, so make use of your own study and teacher-respectability to promote a fat fee and a private profit from the sale of sex. And you'll be double-blessed if he, or anyone else can come between you and the sane criterion of sex in print that you have always held up to your students. Whistling, you mail the letter. Somehow your second cup of coffee has a better flavor than the first.

MAXINE MacKAY
Jacksonville University

AN IMAGE

(Continued from page 5)

take up his historic role in the life of the people.

What is needed now are fewer hosannas on the vast numbers of paper back books that are published and sold, but rather greater visibility for English teachers and occasions for them to tell people of every age what they know.

To climb into a high visibility situation, however, will take zealotry and integrity. The zealotry will enable English teachers to demand with the brassiness and the persistence of the anti-fluoridators or the Un-American activity agitators or the people who oppose mental health, or the every day entrèpreneurs, time in the classrooms, substance in the texts, places on TV, a central place in the national ritual, and imaginative operational control of the English curriculum.

What will be needed will be integrity so that quick successes are not cashed in hungrily as TV gimmicks, so that always the attention is focused on the content of the literature and not drained off in admiration of the mountebank.

With the zealotry and this integrity, I would think English teachers could take up their historic mission, to return the nation to the people, to put meaning into the lives that have been adulterated by chemical fixatives and hidden persuaders, and finally to establish at the very center of the American culture, the loveliness that a persuasive and democratic understanding and appreciation of literature could reflect on every American life.

This could be; but now, alas, in the very center, nothing, and on the edges, the English teachers mumble falsetto in a shabby twilight deaf to their own true inner voices.

LEWIS CARLINER
Education Div., United Automobile Workers

NOTE: Readers wishing a copy of the questionnaire used by Mr. Carliner may have one by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Editor, Upsala College, East Orange, N. J.

LANGUAGE AND LIFE IN THE U.S.A.

Gladys Doty, University of Colorado, and Janet Ross, University of British Columbia

The only book in the field giving instruction and practice in all communication skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. 640 pp. $6.20

"It is the best text I have seen dealing with all of the needs of the foreign student learning English in the U.S."— William F. Marquardt, New York University.

Examination copies are available to teachers of English for foreign students.

ROW, PETERSON & CO.
Evanston, Ill. Elmsford, N.Y.

For the freshman writing course . . .

Modern American Writer 1961

Roma S. King, Jr., and Frederick R. McLeod
University of Kansas City

This new text presents realistic rhetorical principles, with numerous illustrative materials and exercises. The handbook section, a compendium of grammar for writing, includes a complete glossary of usage.

College Division
American Book Company
55 Fifth Avenue, New York 3, New York

NOTICES OF NOTE

Coming off the press next month are the first five volumes in Twayne's United States Authors Series. Planned to present compact critical-analytical studies of both major and minor American writers, the series is under the editorial direction of Sylvia E. Bowman (Indiana University at Fort Wayne). The intent is to present clearly and concisely the facts of the lives of the authors relevant to their literary works. Each volume will contain a selected, annotated bibliography.

The first five books in a series to run to about 75 titles are:

1. WILLIAM FAULKNER by Frederick J. Hoffman.
2. THORNTON WILDER by Rex Burbank.
3. JOHN STEINBECK by Warren French.
4. HAROLD FREDERIC by Hoyt C. Franchere and Thomas F. O'Donnell.
5. EDGAR ALLAN POE by Vincent Buranelli.

The scope of this series is such that it will make new appraisals of major American writers as well as present neglected and forgotten writers in a new perspective. Planned for the general reader and the college and high school student and teacher, the series is one of the biggest projects now going on in American literature.

Twayne Publishers also plans to follow its Authors Series with an equally ambitious American Classics Series which will make available carefully edited texts of known and neglected American works.

• • •

The University of Stockholm, which will be moved from the center of the capital to its northern outskirts, is likely to become the first real drive-in university in the world. On the ground level, according to a project that has just been accepted as a basis for further planning, there will be parking space for four thousand cars, with direct access to lecture rooms, laboratories, etc., on the next floor. All parts of the campus will be reached by motorcar, but vehicles and pedestrians will be kept separate throughout the area.

NOTICES OF NOTE

"The Improved Teaching of English: National Issues, Problems, and Approaches," an address by George Winchester Stone, Jr., is now available as a brochure distributed for non-profit purposes at 25c and as a long-playing record distributed also for non-profit purposes at $3.00.

Professor Stone delivered his address on October 8, 1960, before the English Workshop Conference of District V at the Texas Woman's University. It is made available through the collaborative efforts of the Texas Joint English Committee and the English Institute for the Improvement of Teaching. Since both the brochure and the LP furnish information that is not available elsewhere, both are of special interest to teachers of English and their students who are preparing to teach.

The brochure and record may be ordered from former CEA director Autrey Nell Wiley, Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas.

OUTSTANDING TEXTS

Effective Communication 2nd ed.

by **Howard Dean** and **Kenneth Bryson,** Montana State College
1961 approx. 576 pp.
Text price: $5.00

The Ways of The Poem

by **Josephine Miles,** University of California, Berkeley
May 1961 approx. 480 pp.
Paperbound: $3.25
Clothbound: $4.95

For approval copies, write:
Box 903, Dept. CEA

PH PRENTICE-HALL, Inc.
Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Letters to The Editor

Sir:

I read with interest, as I am sur many publishers as well as academics di your editorial "Assembly Line Texts" i the January issue of **The CEA Critic.** Al though you invited responses from textboo writers and users, may I take the liberty o expressing an editor's opinion? I speak, b the way, having had editorial experienc both in a relatively small, privately-owne firm and in one of the larger publicly hel companies.

With much of what you say, I do no disagree. I would certainly not attempt t deny that a good many "automated," "bland" textbooks are being published to day. Nor would I try to deny that ofte such texts are being produced by team of authors working under extremely clo editorial supervision by a publisher.

I would emphatically deny, however, tha there is any necessary correlation betwee this kind of book publishing and the si of the publishing firm which produc these books. Whether a text is publishe as an individual and original book, th work of an expert, skillful teacher an writer, or whether it is produced as a "de humanized" product — these are matte of each individual publisher's policy, policy determined independently of the si of the firm, and a policy which can var within one firm from book to book. In th past, some of the least inspired, most blan texts have been brought out by small publishers, while the larger firms have ha financial resources allowing them to pub lish more original textbooks which migh have a much more limited market.

Because of increasing costs in the pro duction and distribution of texts to rapidly expanding market, the larger firm which result from mergers and publi sale of stock are today often better ab to serve the academic community. Bu again, the editorial policies of these com panies are not necessarily related to the size in any way that could affect the con tents of the book they produce.

KENNEY WITHE
Editor, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, I

THE CEA CRITIC
UPSALA COLLEGE
EAST ORANGE, N. J.

Return Postage Guaranteed

Send Form 3579 notices to Editor, Upsala College, East Orange, New Jersey

Second Class Postage Paid at Livingston, N. J.

Duke University Library
Durham, N. C.